

Marine Corps Total Force

Discussion

The Marine Corps performs many functions and missions in support of the national military strategy, and executes a wide variety of other tasks deemed essential for the Nation. The 172,518 active duty and 39,624 reserve Marines provide support to the intelligence community, airlift support to the Executive Branch, and a Chemical Biological Incident Response Force to the Nation as a whole. They help safeguard U.S. embassies and provide security at key naval installations. They support counter-narcotics operations, and serve in countless billets throughout the defense establishment and other government agencies. The Marine Reserve maintains a presence in 184 sites in the United States, and they - and the active Marines who support them - perform an impressive array of augmentation and reinforcement tasks as part of the Marine Corps Total Force.

While all of these duties are very important, The Corps' primary obligation to the people of the United States is to field fully manned, combat ready Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs). In maintaining this expeditionary force in readiness the Corps mans a young and lean force. The Marine Corps has only 52 percent of its enlisted force in the highest 6 enlisted grades. This compares to 70 percent or higher for the other services. Additionally the Corps officer to enlisted ratio is 1:9, by far the leanest in the Department of Defense. These factors allow junior Marines to exercise more responsibility, initiative, and leadership while providing a significantly less expensive force.

The Corps number one concern is the manning of the operating forces. Approximately 112,000 Marines are in the Operating Forces with nearly 30,500 forward deployed, forward based, forward stationed, or deployed for training at any given time. There are 1,101 Marines guarding diplomatic outposts in 123 detachments around the world. All of these Marines are organized, trained, and equipped to face a broad array of potential threats. The Corps has recently identified 1,200 Marines in supporting billets that will be replaced by civilians enabling their transfer to the operational forces. The Corps will continue to search for additional such resource efficient alternatives that will allow it to achieve its goal of manning the forces at the highest possible level with the greatest possible economy.

The Marine Corps Reserve continues to play a vital role in the Total Force by providing trained and qualified units and individuals available for active duty during times of war, national emergencies, and other times

as national security may require. In FY99 Marine Reserve civil affairs detachments were called upon to provide support in Bosnia and Kosovo; reserve KC-130s supported Operation NORTHERN WATCH and continue to be called upon to support forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Units. Infantry, aviation, and combat service support units, and individual reservists routinely participate in exercises BATTLE GRIFFIN in Norway, COBRA GOLD in Thailand, ULCHI FOCUS LENS in Korea, COMBINED ENDEAVOR in Germany, and ASCIET and URBAN WARRIOR in the United States. The Marine Corps Reserve, effectively augments the Active Component creating a Total Force that is ready when called upon.

Marine Corps Total Force includes the capability to mobilize a population of over 20,000 retired Marines to fill pre-assigned billets throughout the CONUS bases and stations. Their experience and dedication to Corps and country can be counted on in case of national crisis.

Civilian employees are a crucial part of the Total Force, providing unique skills and continuity essential in the supporting establishment. With the leanest population in DoD, the manning support provided by “civilian Marines” allows Marines to fill billets in operational units enhancing overall training, readiness, and sustainability.

Marine Corps Position

The success of the Marine Corps in war and in supporting national policy in peace is directly attributable to its commitment of providing a balanced and efficient Total Force. Maintaining expeditionary readiness is dependent on high quality people, both active and reserve Marines as well as civilian personnel.